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Title: The figure of the dragon in Elder Germanic Literature

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I desired dragons with a profound desire. Of course, I in my timid body did not wish to have them in the neighborhood. But the world that contained even the imagination of Fáfnir was richer and more beautiful, at whatever the cost of peril.

J.R.R.Tolkien

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Introduction

This dissertation analyzes the figure of the dragon in Elder Germanic Literature. I will talk about the etymology of the word dragon and briefly tell its story and meaning following the *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde* definition of the word *Drache*. We will see how the dragon can be related both to fire and water being the beast that burns into its own flames or the giant sea-fish derived from a Greek background.

In this work I will analyze those medieval texts where the dragon is present and describe it. I decided to take into account the two most important dragons in the Germanic tradition following the words of Tolkien, "in northern literature there are only two (dragons) that are significant...we have but the dragon of the Volsungs, Fáfnir, and Beowulf's bane"[1].

Therefore I will analyze passages of *Beowulf*, *Fáfnismál*, *Völsungasaga*, and *Nibelungenlied* where dragons are described and I will give the translation into modern English. Then through a linguistic analysis of the word used to describe the dragon, I will explain why the beasts are referred to as snakes, worms or flying beasts.

[1]J.R.R.Tolkien, "*Beowulf*. The Monsters and the Critics." In *An Anthology of Beowulf Criticism*.Reprinted from *Procee dings of the British Academy* 22, 1936

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Apart from my efforts, the success of any project depends largely on the encouragement and guidelines of many others. I would like to express my special appreciation and thanks to Professor Bampi, who introduced me to Germanic Philology and Historical Linguistic back three years ago and awakened my interest in these subjects, by encouraging my research and allowed me to grow as a student.

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I will be forever grateful for your love.

1. Origins of the word dragon

1.1. Etymology

The *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde* (RGA) is the main source for this firs part of the essay even if it will be quoted during most part of the essay. In the RGA under the voice *Drache* we find a first matching of the word "dragon" with the Greek word δέρκομαι (I see) connecting the dragon with its eyes usually depicted as sharp-looking and that have the spellbinding power of paralyzing opponents. While a second option still deriving from Greek is δράκων (genitive δράκοντος) meaning "serpent, giant seafish".

If we consider the forms of the word dragon in different languages we start from PIE **derk*- (to see), and then have nhd. *drache*, mhd. *trache*, ahd. *trahho*, altobd. *traccho*, mhd. *tracke* (the last two derived from the vulgar Latin form of *dracco*), ags. *draca*/*drake*, anord. *dreki*; all derived from the Latin word *draco* (huge serpent, dragon) and from the already cited Greek word δράκων from δράκ-, strong aorist stem of δερκεσθαι (to see clearly). Perhaps the literal sense of the word is "the one with the (deadly) glance [1/2]".

Furthermore we must not forget that the Greek letter **δ** (delta) derived from the eye of the reptiles, in our case this connects us with the snake and its piercing eyes that leads us to the meaning of the word δράκων.

The adoption of the Latin word in the German language cannot be older than the earliest contacts of the Germanic tribes with the Roman culture (1st century BC), but on the other hand must be due to the shift of *k* > *ch* before completion of the High German Sound Shift (7th century AD) have taken place.[2]

To give a full etymological explanation of the word Dragon one hypothesis given in the RGA is that loanwords were usually taken with the things they designate, and here the dragon could have been seen on Roman ensigns and treasure chests on which images of snakes or dragons were used as ornamentation[3].

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[1] Homann, Holger, 1986: Drache. In: *Reallexicon der Germanischen Altertumskunde*. 6. Berlin-New York. Pp.131-137
[2] Taken and adapted from *http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=dragon* last viewed on Dec. 11th
[3] That is why - in my hypothesis - the Dragon is usually the guard of immense treasures.

The word ags. *draca* does not appear so often in manuscript, it appears for the first time in texts of the 10th and 11th Century. Beowulf alone has 14 presence of the word, Jente[4] has found 5 presences and Whitman[5] 15. The RGA attests as oldest certification in Germany two glosses of the 9th and 10th Century, one is the Otfrid's *Book of Gospels* (9th Century) and in the 11th Century is occasionally mentioned in Notker Labeo (10th Century) and Physiologus[1/6].

In the next chapters I will analyze the dragons that appears in Germanic Literature by analyzing the beast of ***Beowulf*** (8th - 11th Century), of the ***Nibelungenlied*** (beginning of 13th Century), of the section of *The Elder Edda* (1270 AC) named ***Fáfnismál*** and finally the beast of the ***Völsungasaga*** (late 13th Century), that are not always the same things, sometimes are winged dragons, some other times wyrm or snakes.

1.2. Different notions of *draconitas* [7]

The purpose of this work is to analyze the figure of the dragon as it appears in the Germanic medieval texts specified in the introduction. Considering the different types of dragon we have a different shade of "dragonness" or *draconitas* and my aim here is to clarify differences and analogies of dragons and their slayers.
I will analyze the background that lies beneath the dragon in each text, followed by the contrastive and comparative analysis of the historical and linguistic characteristics.

A trouble that arises when we talk about a dragon, how should we deal with this beast that for a long time remained to the margins of the scholars' research? In 1936 when Tolkien said that "real dragon, essential both to the machinery and the ideas of a poem or tale, are actually rare" and he counted as important "the Encircler of the world, *Miðgarðs ormr*, the dragon of the Volsungs, Fàfnir and Beowulf's bane"[8], with his words the view on dragons changed, no more considered as something marginal but analyzed and studied as an important part of literature.

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[4] Jente, Richard, *Die mythologischen Ausdriicke im altenglischen Wortschatz*, Heidelberg: Winter, 1921
[5] Whitman, Charles H., *The Old English Animal Names*, Anglia, 1907, pp.389-390 has collected Anglo-Saxon dragon references.
[6] *Physiologus* – Written in Greek by unknown author and traditionally dated back to the 2nd Century AD, the *P.* is the father of the bestiaries of the 12th and 13th Cent. since the texts are a collection of descriptions of real animals , fantastic creatures, beast, stone and plants. Sometimes we also find illuminations following the description that is always connected with Christian teaching whether this is real (cited from the Bible) or adapted to suit the moral. The citation is taken from a study on the *P.* by the university of Chicago Press, *Physiologus: A Medieval Book of Natural Lore*, University of Chicago Press, 15th Oct. 2009, pp.144.
[7] Lionarons, Joyce Tally. *The Medieval Dragon.* Hisarlik Press, UK: 1998. p. 2
[8] Tolkien, J.R.R., "*Beowulf*: The Monsters and the Critics," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 22, 1936

The words used in a texts to portray a dragon are not a simple words to describe, they convey different representation of what a dragon may be, sometimes a *snake*, some others a *worm* or a flying beast. Moreover we do not have a realistic dimension of the dragon, for this beast only exists in literary fiction. Thus, we must deal with the linguistic representation of it and we can do this only by analyzing the context in which we find it from time to time.

As Joyce Tally Lionarons puts it, "in order to understand the meaning of the word-image dragon in medieval literature it is therefore necessary to reconstruct from each individual text both the internal and the external questions to which the dragon is an answer"[9].

The dragon is often "predicated upon an assumption of continuation within imitation"[10] and we will see here how this is the case of the texts analyzed, yet the dragons there are different. I tried to analyze the background of dragon's lore. Why is the dragon seen in a way and not in another? How is it described? How can each dragon be compared with the others?

1.3. A semantically marked verb

I will mention here the semantically marked verb which is present in the Indo-European narration of the dragon-slaying event. We have different myths that refer to dragons in the Indo-European lore and there we can see the recursive presence of a verb which is semantically marked as defining the event of slaying a dragon.

The reconstruction that scholars have given of this verb in IE is $*g^{w}hen$- while we find a semantically marked periphrasis in the Germanic languages, OE *to bonan weorđan*, ON *at bana ve rđa*, OHG *ti banin werdan.*

If language hands down a verb that explain an action related with the dragon we can only infer that the dragon must have been of some importance whether as a symbol that hold different meanings, or as a beast worthy of its own verb, hence considered an important figure in the folklore.

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[9] Lionarons, Joyce Tally. *The Medieval Dragon.* Hisarlik Press, UK: 1998. p. 2

[10] Jauss, Hans Robert. *The Alterity and Modernity of Medieval Literature*, Vol. 10, No. 2, Medieval Literature and Contemporary Theory, 1979,The Johns Hopkins University Press p. 190

1.4. The dragon and its connections

From the *Physiologus* we learn that the natural enemy of the dragon is the **panther** and when the dragon hears its voice is "seized by fear and bolsters itself within subterranean caves […]. Having coiled itself up, the dragon falls into a deep sleep and remains there immobile and senseless as if dead". Besides we have the **ichneumon** that covers itself with mud to kill the dragon and Pliny the Elder describes the ichneumon as a beast "willingness to fight to the death with the *snake* by entering its throat"[1].

It is interesting to notice how Pliny the Elder indicates also the **snake** as the enemy of the ichneumon that later on in the Middle Ages was considered to be the enemy of the dragon. One possible reason why the dragon is also depicted as a snake could be this connection.

Laura Mancinelli[2] points out how the dragon, the *Lindwurm* of the Germanic tradition is related to the German word *Linte*, the lime tree in the English language.

According to Kluge[3] we analyzed the first part of *Lindwurm* as the German *lint*, *lind* which derived from the Old Norse *linnr*, meaning snake. Across time the original meaning of the word was lost, and *lint* was identified with the lime tree, the *Linte* in German language. This connection of the dragon with the lime tree is present also in *Fáfnismál*.

> **Lindwurm**, m., "winged serpent or dragon", borrowed, with the revival of Mid HG. literature in the last century, from MidHG. *lintwurm*, OHG. *lindwurm*, m., 'dragon' (comp. also *Wurm*). The first component is identical in meaning with the second, which is only an explanation of the obscure term *lint*, which was no longer understood ; comp. OHG. *lind*, *lint*, "serpent" ; OIc. *linnr*, " serpent" (for *linþr*). *Windhund* is a similar compound.[4]

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[1] Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, Book 8, pp.35-36, 37
[2] See the introduction to *I Nibelunghi*, ET Classici Einaudi p.XXVI
[3] Friedrich Kluge. *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache*, Berlin-Leipzig, 1924. Digitalized by the Internet Archive in 2007 at < www.archive.org/details/etymologicaldictOOkluguoft > last viewed on 20th February 2014
[4] *ibidem* p.217

2. Textual and linguistic analysis

2.1. Beowulf

In this first section dedicated to the linguistic analysis of the texts I will be considering the passages in the Beowulf where the word dragon appears. I will report the passage of Beowulf's fighting with the dragon (2200-3182) and I chose to present the original Old English text to the left of the chart and the translation into modern English on the right side[1].

My purpose is to highlight how the dragon in *Beowulf* is described with different words and I will try to figure out how it could possibly be like.

The dragon in Beowulf is never described in detail, the language that allows us to view the dragon has a polyglot element in itself, it contains within itself an implicit, largely unconscious yet nonetheless inescapable dialogue between Latinate and Germanic notions of the dragon. [2]

As we saw the etymology of the word **dragon** said us that derive from the Latin word *draca*, that appears five times as its own in the text, and only 1 time when it designate Sigemund's dragon (892), see Tab. 1, and six times as a compound word (*ligdraca* / *legdraca* – fire dragon; *niðdraca* – hostile dragon; *fyrdraca* – fire dragon; *eorðdraca* – earth dragon; *sædracan* – sea dragon) , see Tab. 2. What we can see in these two charts is the Latin influence in the text.

In Tab. 3 I have grouped together all the occurrences of the Germanic word *wyrm*, that appears 18 times alone and only one time as a compound word that designate the dragon hoard (*wyrmhord*) and two time as a compound word free from the dragon's connection, once as *wyrmcynnes* that can be translated as "of the race of the serpents", referring here (1425) to the sea-dragons of the Grendel mere; the other time as *wyrmfah*, a word used to describe the sword the Beowulf finds in Grendel's hall. All these compound nouns are listed in Tab.4.

Bold font in the original text and therefore in the translation is mine to point out the occurrences of the words that stand for the dragon.

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[1] translation taken from: Benjamin Slade, *Beowulf: diacritically-marked text and facing translation* open source here www.heorot.dk/beowulf-rede-text.html last viewed on 20th February 2014

[2] M.M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, University of Texas Press, 1981, p. 12

2.1.1. Original text of Beowulf

- Tab. 1 – Lists all the occurrences of the Latin word *draca* in the Old English text of the Beowulf manuscript. We should read these parts as the Latin's lore into the Germanic substratum of the manuscripts.

890 *Hwæþre him gesælde ðæt þæt swurd þurhwod* *wrætlicne wyrm, þæt hit on wealle ætstod,* *dryhtlic iren;* ***draca*** *morðre swealt.* *Hæfde aglæca elne gegongen* *þæt he beahhordes brucan moste*	however it was granted him that the sword pierced the wondrous wyrm, so that it stood fixed in the wall, the noble iron; the **dragon** perished in the slaughter; the fearsome one had ensured by courage that he the ring-hoard might possess
2210 *eald eþelweard, oððæt an ongan* *deorcum nihtum* ***draca*** *ricsian,* *se ðe on heaum hofe hord beweotode,* *stanbeorh steapne; stig under læg,* *eldum uncuð. þær on innan going*	an old warden of the fatherland until one began in the dark nights, a **dragon** to rule, he who in a high house watched over a hoard, a stark stone barrow; the path below lay unknown to men. There went inside
2290 *dyrnan cræfte* ***dracan*** *heafde neah.* *Swa mæg unfæge eaðe gedigan* *wean ond wræcsið, se ðe waldendes* *hyldo gehealdeþ! Hordweard sohte* *georne æfter grunde, wolde guman findan*	in his stealthy craft near the **dragon**'s head. Provided that, one not doomed may easily survive woe and hardship, he who the Ruler's grace protects. The hoard-ward sought eagerly along the ground, he wished to find the man
2400 *þe he wið þam wyrme gewegan sceolde.* *Gewat þa XIIa sum torne gebolgen* *dryhten Geata* ***dracan*** *sceawian.* *Hæfde þa gefrunen hwanan sio fæhð aras,* *bealonið biorna; him to bearme cwom*	when he with the serpent must struggle. Then he went, one of twelve, swollen with anger, the lord of the Geats, to behold the **dragon**; he had heard then whence this feud arose, wicked hostility for men: to his bosom came
2545 *stondan stanbogan, stream ut þonan* *brecan of beorge. Wæs þære burnan wælm* *heaðofyrum hat; ne meahte horde neah* *unbyrnende ænige hwile* *deop gedygan for* ***dracan*** *lege.*	it stood by the stone-arch, a stream out from there breaking out of the barrow; there was the brook's surge hot with deadly fire, he could not near the hoard without burning for any space of time endure the depths on account of the **dragon**'s fire.
3130 *þæt hi ofostlice ut geferedon* *dyre maðmas.* ***Dracan*** *ec scufun,* *wyrm ofer weallclif, leton weg niman,* *flod fæðmian frætwa hyrde.* *þa wæs wunden gold on wæn hladen*	that they quickly carried out precious treasures; the **dragon** too they shoved, the wyrm over the cliff-wall, they let the waves take, the flood enfold, that keeper of baubles; that was braided gold loaded on the waggon

- Tab. 2 – Lists all the compound words derived from *draca* that represent the linguistic dialogue between the Latin and the Germanic *Weltanschauung*. (**ligdraca** / **legdraca** – fire dragon; **niðdraca** – hostile dragon; **fyrdraca** – fire dragon; **eorðdraca** – earth dragon; **sædracan** – sea dragon)

1425 (Sigemund's dragon) *Gesawon ða æfter wætere wyrmcynnes fela,* *sellice **sædracan**, sund cunnian,* *swylce on næshleoðum nicras licgean,* *ða on undernmæl oft bewitigað* *sorhfulne sið on seglrade*	they saw then through the water many of the race of serpents, strange **sea-dragon** exploring the lake, also on the cape-slopes were lounging nicors, they in mid-morning often carry out grievous sorties on the sail-road
2330 *ofer ealde riht, ecean dryhtne,* *bitre gebulge. Breost innan weoll* *þeostrum geþoncum, swa him geþywe ne* *wæs. Hæfde **ligdraca** leoda fæsten,* *ealond utan, eorðweard ðone*	against ancient law eternal Lord had bitterly angered; inside his breast welled with thoughts of gloom, such was not usual for him. The **fire-drake** had the fortress of the people, by the coast-land, the stronghold
3040 *laðne licgean; wæs se **legdraca*** *grimlic, gryrefah, gledum beswæled.* *Se wæs fiftiges fotgemearces* *lang on legere, lyftwynne heold* *nihtes hwilum, nyðer eft gewat*	the loathsome one lying dead: the **fire-drake** was a grim gruesome guest burnt by flames; it was fifty foot-measures long as it lay; in air-joy it had ruled the times of the night, down again had gone
2685 *se ðe meca gehwane, mine gefræge,* *swenge ofersohte, þonne he to sæcce bær* *wæpen wundrum heard; næs him wihte ðe* *sel. þa wæs þeodsceaða þriddan siðe,* *frecne **fyrdraca**, fæhða gemyndig*	that each one of the blades I heard in stroke he over-taxed; when he bore to battle a weapon hardened by wounds, it was not any better for him. Then the scourge of people a third time, the fierce **fire-drake** enmity in mind
2270 *hran æt heortan. Hordwynne fond* *eald uhtsceaða opene standan,* *se ðe byrnende biorgas seceð,* *nacod **niðdraca**, nihtes fleogeð* *fyre befangen; hyne foldbuend*	reached to his heart. Hoard-joy he found, the old twilight-scather, standing open, he who, burning, seeks barrows, the naked **malevolent dragon**; he flies by night, encircled in fire; him earth-dwellers
2710 *siðast sigehwila sylfes dædum,* *worlde geweorces. ða sio wund ongon,* *þe him se **eorðdraca** ær geworhte,* *swelan ond swellan; he þæt sona onfand,* *þæt him on breostum bealoniðe weoll*	the last time of victory by his own deeds, in the world of action. Then the wound began, which him the **earth-dragon** had caused earlier, to swelter and to swell; he soon discovered that, it him in the breast welled with deadly evil
2825 *egeslic **eorðdraca** ealdre bereafod,* *bealwe gebæded. Beahhordum leng* *wyrm wohbogen wealdan ne moste,* *ac hine irenna ecga fornamon,* *hearde, heaðoscearde homera lafe*	the terrible **earth-dragon** bereft of life, balefully beaten down; the ring-hoard longer the wickedly coiled wyrm could not control, rather him irons' edges took off, the hard, battle-notched leavings of hammers

- Tab. 3 – Groups all the occurrences of the Germanic word *wyrm* (ON. *ormr*) in *Beowulf*.

2285 *feasceaftum men. Frea sceawode*	to the wretched man; a lord examined
fira fyrngeweorc forman siðe.	the ancient work of men for the first time.
*þa se **wyrm** onwoc, wroht wæs geniwad;*	then the **worm** awoke, quarrel was renewed
stonc ða æfter stane, stearcheort onfand	he sniffed along the stone, the harsh-hearted one
feondes fotlast; he to forð gestop	found the foot-print of his foe; he too far forward had stepped
2305 *wolde se laða lige forgyldan*	he wished the injury to repay with flame,
drincfæt dyre. þa wæs dæg sceacen	the dear drinking-vessel. Then the day was departed
***wyrme** on willan; no on wealle læg,*	to the joy of the **wyrm**; he did not lie within the wall,
bidan wolde, ac mid bæle for,	(nor) wished to wait, but with bale-fire set forth,
fyre gefysed. Wæs se fruma egeslic	infused with flame; this beginning was terrible
2315 *lað lyftfloga læfan wolde.*	the hateful air-flier wished to leave;
*Wæs þæs **wyrmes** wig wide gesyne,*	the war-strength of that **wyrm** was widely seen,
nearofages nið nean ond feorran,	the malice of the darkly cunning one near and far,
hu se guðsceaða Geata leode	how the war-scather the people of the Geats
hatode ond hynde; hord eft gesceat	hated and humiliated; back to his hoard he shot
2340 *þæt him holtwudu helpan ne meahte,*	that him tree-wood could not help,
lind wið lige. Sceolde lændaga	linden-wood against fire. He had to his seafaring-days,
æþeling ærgod ende gebidan,	the old, good noble, abide the end
*worulde lifes, ond se **wyrm** somod,*	of life in the world, and the **wyrm** together,
þeah ðe hordwelan heolde lange	though the hoard-wealth he had held long.
2345 *Oferhogode ða hringa fengel*	Then he scorned, the rings' lord,
þæt he þone widflogan weorode gesohte,	that he the wide-flier would seek out with a troop,
sidan herge; no he him þa sæcce ondred,	a large army; he did not the strife dread for himself,
*ne him þæs **wyrmes** wig for wiht dyde,*	nor him the **wyrm**'s fire esteem a bit,
eafoð ond ellen, forðon he ær fela	power and courage, for that he before many
2400 *þe he wið þam **wyrme** gewegan sceolde.*	when he with the **serpent** must struggle.
Gewat þa XIIa sum torne gebolgen	Then he went, one of twelve, swollen with anger,
dryhten Geata dracan sceawian.	the lord of the Geats, to behold the dragon;
Hæfde þa gefrunen hwanan sio fæhð aras,	he had heard then whence this feud arose,
bealonið biorna; him to bearme cwom	wicked hostility for men: to his bosom came
2515 *of eorðsele ut geseceð."*	from his earth-hall ventures out to greet."
Gegrette ða gumena gehwylcne,	He then saluted each of the men,
hwate helmberend, hindeman siðe,	bold helm-bearers for the final time,
swæse gesiðas: "Nolde ic sweord beran,	dear companions: "I would not bear a sword,
*wæpen to **wyrme**, gif ic wiste hu*	a weapon against the **wyrm**, if I knew how
2565 *bealohycgendra broga fram oðrum.*	of the harm-intending ones terror of the other;
Stiðmod gestod wið steapne rond	firm-spirited stood with his steep bossed-shield
*winia bealdor, ða se **wyrm** gebeah*	the brave leader of the friends, while the **serpent** coiled
snude tosomne; he on searwum bad.	together swiftly; He in war-gear waited;

Gewat ða byrnende gebogen scriðan	went then burning gliding coiled,
frod on forðweg. þa wæs forma sið *geongan cempan, þæt he guðe ræs* *mid his freodryhtne fremman sceolde.* *Ne gemealt him se modsefa, ne his mæges laf* *gewac æt wige; þæt se **wyrm** onfand*	wise, on the way forth. Then was the first time for the young champion, that he the rush of war with his noble lord had to perform; his spirited heart in him did not melt away, nor the remainder of his strength fail in the fight; then the **wyrm** had discovered
þæt ðu ne alæte be ðe lifigendum *dom gedreosan. Scealt nu dædum rof,* *æðeling anhydig, ealle mægene* *feorh ealgian; ic ðe fullæstu."* *æfter ðam wordum **wyrm** yrre cwom*	that you would not allow, with you still living, glory to fail; you must now in bold deeds, a noble firm in mind, with all of yourstrength, defend your life; I shall support you". After those words the wrathful **wyrm** came
*forwrat Wedra helm **wyrm** on middan.* *Feond gefyldan (ferh ellen wræc),* *ond hi hyne þa begen abroten hæfdon,* *sibæðelingas. Swylc sceolde secg wesan,* *þegn æt ðearfe! þæt ðam þeodne wæs*	The Helm of the Wederas cut through the **wyrm** in the middle. The foe they felled their courage driving out life and then the both of them him had destroyed, the noble kinsmen; so ought a man to be, a thane in need. That was for the chieftain
*Wiglaf leofa, nu se **wyrm** ligeð,* *swefeð sare wund, since bereafod.* *Bio nu on ofoste, þæt ic ærwelan,* *goldæht ongite, gearo sceawige* *swegle searogimmas, þæt ic ðy seft mæge*	dear Wiglaf, now the **wyrm** lies dead, sleeping sorely wounded, deprived of treasure be now in haste, that I the ancient wealth, the possession of gold might perceive, readily behold sparkling cleverly-cut gems, so that I can the more pleasantly
brogdne beadusercean under beorges hrof. *Geseah ða sigehreðig, þa he bi sesse geong,* *magoþegn modig maððumsigla fealo,* *gold glitinian grunde getenge,* *wundur on wealle, ond þæs **wyrmes** denn*	woven battle-shirt under the barrow's roof. He saw then victorious, when he went by the seat, the spirited young thane, many precious jewels, glittering gold close to the ground, wonders on the wall, and the **wyrm**'s den
þæt he þone grundwong ongitan meahte, *wræte giondwlitan. Næs ðæs **wyrmes** þær* *onsyn ænig, ac hyne ecg fornam.* *ða ic on hlæwe gefrægn hord reafian,* *eald enta geweorc, anne mannan*	so that he on the ground could perceive, look over the ornament; there was not of the **wyrm** any appearance, for him the blade-edge took. Then I heard in the mound the hoard plundered, old work of giants, one man
egeslic eorðdraca ealdre bereafod, *bealwe gebæded. Beahhordum leng* ***wyrm** wohbogen wealdan ne moste,* *ac hine irenna ecga fornamon,* *hearde, heaðoscearde homera lafe*	the terrible earth-dragon bereft of life, balefully beaten down; the ring-hoard longer the wickedly coiled **wyrm** could not control, rather him irons' edges took off, the hard, battle-notched leavings of hammers

2900 *Nu is wilgeofa Wedra leoda,* *dryhten Geata, deaðbedde fæst,* *wunað wælreste **wyrmes** dædum.* *Him on efn ligeð ealdorgewinna* *sexbennum seoc; sweorde ne meahte*	"Now is the wish-giver of the Wederas' nation, the lord of the Geats unmoving on his death-bed, remaining in the repose of slaughter by the **wyrm**'s deeds; beside him lies his life-contender sick with seax-wounds: he could not with his sword
3035 *ærran mælum; þa wæs endedæg* *godum gegongen, þæt se guðcyning,* *Wedra þeoden, wundordeaðe swealt.* *ær hi þær gesegan syllicran wiht,* ***wyrm** on wonge wiðerræhtes þær*	in earlier times; then it was the end-day come for good men, that the war-king, the Wederas' chieftain, died a wondrous death. First they saw there a rarer creature, the **wyrm** on the ground just opposite there
3130 *þæt hi ofostlice ut geferedon* *dyre maðmas. Dracan ec scufun,* ***wyrm** ofer weallclif, leton weg niman,* *flod fæðmian frætwa hyrde.* *þa wæs wunden gold on wæn hladen*	that they quickly carried out precious treasures; the dragon too they shoved, the **wyrm** over the cliff-wall, they let the waves take, the flood enfold, that keeper of baubles; that was braided gold loaded on the waggon

- Tab. 4 – Groups all the compound words formed by *wyrm*.

1425 *Gesawon ða æfter wætere **wyrmcynnes** fela,* *sellice sædracan, sund cunnian,* *swylce on næshleoðum nicras licgean,* *ða on undernmæl oft bewitigað* *sorhfulne sið on seglrade*	they saw then through the water many of the **race of serpents** strange sea-dragon exploring the lake, also on the cape-slopes were lounging nicors, they in mid-morning often carry out grievous sorties on the sail-road
1695 *þurh runstafas rihte gemearcod,* *geseted ond gesæd hwam þæt sweord* *geworht, irena cyst, ærest wære,* *wreoþenhilt ond **wyrmfah**. ða se wisa* *spræc sunu Healfdenes (swigedon ealle)*	in rune-staves rightly marked, it was set down and said, for whom the sword wrought, choicest of irons had been first, with a twisted-hilt and serpent-patterned; then the wise man spoke, the son of Half-Dane all fell silent
2220 *bufolc beorna, þæt he gebolgen wæs.* *Nealles mid gewealdum **wyrmhord** abræc* *sylfes willum, se ðe him sare gesceod,* *ac for þreanedlan þeow nathwylces* *hæleða bearna heteswengeas fleah*	the neighbouring folk of men, that he was enraged. He was not at all in control of the skill of the **worm-hoard**, of his own desire, he who sorely injured him, because of dire-distress a thief of I know not which sons of men fled hostile blows

2.1.2. Analysis of the dragon in *Beowulf*

In this section I will add some clarification regarding the words used to describe the dragon in *Beowulf*. We described in section 3.1 where the dragon is mentioned in the manuscripts, and we have explained the different meaning of the words used.

By using the words *draca* and *wyrm* in the same text we can say that there exists a linguistic dialogue between the cultures behind the text, the Latin and Germanic culture meet in *Beowulf* which is a text with some Christian elements but still bound to paganism with its beasts and magic.

We can just infer from the early entering of the word *draca* in the English language that the Germanic substratum is important and works as a background for the Latin elements in the text. Such compound words such as **ligdraca, fyrdraca**, **eorðdraca, niðdraca** and **scedraca**[1] show us the Germanic word made of fire and earth, of sea and strife in opposition to the Latin word of the ecclesiastic culture.

Let us now analyze those words that describe the dragon and define its characteristics, such as the presence of wings, its ability to breath fire, its evil connotation and its habit to guard a treasure. We also have a linguistic description of the body and of the age of this dragon. Everything will be explained in the next pages.[2] First we can say that the dragon of *Beowulf* can fly and has wings, we know this from these verses.

***lyftfloga* – air flier**

*lað **lyftfloga** læfan wolde.*	the hateful **air-flier** wished to leave;
Wæs þæs wyrmes wig wide gesyne,	the war-strength of that wyrm was widely seen,
nearofages nið nean ond feorran,	the malice of the darkly cunning one near and far,
hu se guðsceaða Geata leode	how the war-scather the people of the Geats
hatode ond hynde; hord eft gesceat	hated and humiliated; back to his hoard he shot

***widfloga* – far flier**

Oferhogode ða hringa fengel	Then he scorned, the rings' lord,
*þæt he þone **widflogan** weorode gesohte,*	that he the **wide-flier** would seek out with a troop,
sidan herge; no he him þa sæcce ondred,	a large army; he did not the strife dread for himself,
ne him þæs wyrmes wig for wiht dyde,	nor him the wyrm's fire esteem a bit,
eafoð ond ellen, forðon he ær fela	power and courage, for that he before many

[1] "Scedraca", *Anglia Zeitschrift für Englische Philologie*. 1907. Reprint. London: Forgotten Books, 2013. Print. p. 390-391

[2] Malcolm Godden,Simon Keynes, *Anglo-Saxon England:36*, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom, 2007, pp. 107

[3] Occurrences of the words *draca* and *wyrm* fist analyzed by Rauer (2000: 32).

2830 *þæt se **widfloga** wundum stille*
hreas on hrusan hordærne neah.
Nalles æfter lyfte lacende hwearf
middelnihtum, maðmæhta wlonc
ansyn ywde, ac he eorðan gefeoll

so that the **wide-flier**, stilled by wounds,
fell to the ground near the hoard-store;
not at all through the air flying turned
in the middle of nights, proud of his prized
possessions, manifested an appearance, but he fell
to earth

***guðfloga* – battle flier**

2525 *forfleon fotes trem, ac unc furður sceal*
weorðan æt wealle, swa unc wyrd geteoð,
metod manna gehwæs. Ic eom on mode from
*þæt ic wið þone **guðflogan** gylp ofersitte.*
Gebide ge on beorge byrnum werede

flee a foot but for us it must
happen at the wall as Fate allots us,
the Creator of all men; I am bold in spirit
that I against the **war-flier** forbear from boast.
You, await here on the barrow, clad in byrnies

***uhtflogan* – dawn or the night flyer**

2760 *ealdes **uhtflogan**, orcas stondan,*
fyrnmanna fatu feormendlease,
hyrstum behrorene; þær wæs helm monig
eald ond omig, earmbeaga fela
searwum gesæled. Sinc eaðe mæg

the old **twilight-flier**, beakers standing,
the vessels of men of old lacking a burnisher,
stripped of adornments; there was a multitude of
helms
old and rusty, many arm-rings
cleverly fastened treasure easily may

Regarding the character of the dragon we know that it is considered an enemy, a **sceaða**, and we find 5 compounds nouns describing the dragon as the enemy of the people, the evil enemy and the poisonous one. The fact that the dragon is considered to be poisonous will connect us to Sigurð and Fáfnir which is a venomous dragon which will be analyzed in the next section.

***uhtsceaða* – enemy at dawn**

2270 *hran æt heortan. Hordwynne fond*
*eald **uhtsceaða** opene standan,*
se ðe byrnende biorgas seceð,
nacod niðdraca, nihtes fleogeð
fyre befangen; hyne foldbuend

reached to his heart. Hoard-joy he found,
the old **twilight-scather**, standing open,
he who, burning, seeks barrows,
the naked malevolent dragon; he flies by night,
encircled in fire; him earth-dwellers

***þeodsceaða* – people's enemy**

2275 *……nan. He gesecean sceall*
hord on hrusan, þær he hæðen gold
warað wintrum frod, ne byð him wihte ðy sel.
*Swa se **ðeodsceaða** þreo hund wintra*
heold on hrusan hordærna sum

…… He has to seek
harm in the ground, where he heathen gold
guards, wise in winters; he is not a bit better for that.
So the **people-scather** three hundred winters
ruled in the earth of one of the hoard-halls

2685 *se ðe meca gehwane, mine gefræge,*
swenge ofersohte, þonne he to sæcce bær
wæpen wundrum heard; næs him wihte ðe
sel.
*Þa wæs **þeodsceaða** þriddan siðe,*
frecne fyrdraca, fæhða gemyndig

that each one of the blades I heard
in stroke he over-taxed; when he bore to battle
a weapon hardened by wounds, it was not any better
for him.
Then the **scourge of people** a third time,
the fierce fire-drake enmity in mind

***guđsceaða* – war enemy**

2315 *lað lyftfloga læfan wolde.* *Wæs þæs wyrmes wig wide gesyne,* *nearofages nið nean ond feorran,* *hu se **guðsceaða** Geata leode* *hatode ond hynde; hord eft gesceat*	the hateful air-flier wished to leave; the war-strength of that wyrm was widely seen, the malice of the darkly cunning one near and far, how the **war-scather** the people of the Geats hated and humiliated; back to his hoard he shot,

***mansceađa* – evil enemy**

2510 *Beowulf maðelode, beotwordum spræc* *niehstan siðe: "Ic geneðde fela* *guða on geogoðe; gyt ic wylle,* *frod folces weard, fæhðe secan,* *mærðu fremman, gif mec se **mansceaða***	Beowulf declared, spoke vow-words for the last time: “I have risked many wars in my youth; yet I wish, old, wise warden of the folk, to seek vendetta, to earn renown, if me that **wreaker of evil**

***attorsceađa* – poisonus enemy**

2835 *for ðæs hildfruman hondgeweorce.* *Huru þæt on lande lyt manna ðah,* *mægenagendra, mine gefræge,* *þeah ðe he dæda gehwæs dyrstig wære,* *þæt he wið **attorsceaðan** oreðe geræsde*	by the battle-leader's work of his own hands. Indeed it on land few men succeeded, possessors of strength, I have heard, though he in all deeds were daring; that he against the **poison-scourge**'s breath rushed

The usual occupation of the Germanic dragon that remained in many contemporaries dragons is to guard a treasure in a grave mound or in a barrow. In the manuscript the dragon is called **weard** “guardian” of a barrow, or of a treasure. We will see further on in our analysis how the treasure is a recursive theme present also in the Sigurđ’s adventure. The *weard*-dragon words can be found at lines:

***weard* - guardian**

2410 *to ðæs ðe he eorðsele anne wisse,* *hlæw under hrusan holmwylme neh,* *yðgewinne; se wæs innan full* *wrætta ond wira. **Weard** unhiore,* *gearo guðfreca, goldmaðmas heold*	to where the earth-hall he alone knew, the cairn under the ground near the surging of the sea, the struggle of the waves; it was full inside of jewels and intricate metal-work; an unpleasant **guard**, ready, eager war-fighter held golden treasures
3060 *wræte under wealle. **Weard** ær ofsloh* *feara sumne; þa sio fæhð gewearð* *gewrecen wraðlice. Wundur hwar þonne* *eorl ellenrof ende gefere* *lifgesceafta, þonne leng ne mæg*	vengeance under the walls; this **warden** earlier slew one man of a few; then was the feud wrathfully avenged. It is a wondor where then a man famed for courage should meet end of his fated life, when he can no longer

***hordweard* – hoard guardian**

2290 *dyrnan cræfte dracan heafde neah.* *Swa mæg unfæge eaðe gedigan* *wean ond wræcsið, se ðe waldendes* *hyldo gehealdeþ! **Hordweard** sohte* *georne æfter grunde, wolde guman findan*	in his stealthy craft near the dragon's head. Provided that, one not doomed may easily survive woe and hardship, he who the Ruler's grace protects. The **hoard-ward** sought eagerly along the ground, he wished to find the man

2300 *sincfæt sohte. He þæt sona onfand*
ðæt hæfde gumena sum goldes gefandod,
*heahgestreona. **Hordweard** onbad*
earfoðlice oððæt æfen cwom;
wæs ða gebolgen beorges hyrde

sought the treasure-cup; he suddenly discovered,
that a certain man had distrubed the gold,
the high treasures; the **hoard-ward** waited
with great difficulty, until evening came;
then was enraged the keeper of the barrow,

2550 *Let ða of breostum, ða he gebolgen wæs,*
Wedergeata leod word ut faran,
stearcheort styrmde; stefn in becom
heaðotorht hlynnan under harne stan.
*Hete wæs onhrered, **hordweard** oncniow*

Then he let from his breast, when he was angered,
the Weder-Geat's leader, a word burst out,
the staunch-hearted one roared; his voice came in,
ringing battle-clear beneath the hoary grey stone;
hate was aroused, the **hoard-guard** knew

2590 *elles hwergen, swa sceal æghwylc mon*
alætan lændagas. Næs ða long to ðon
þæt ða aglæcean hy eft gemetton.
*Hyrte hyne **hordweard** (hreðer æðme weoll)*
niwan stefne; nearo ðrowode

elsewhere, as must every man
abandon loaned-days. It was not long to when
that the fierce enemies again met each other:
the **hoard-guardian** heartened himself, his breast
swelled with breath,
another time; cruelly suffered

***beorges hyrde* – borrow guardian**

2300 *sincfæt sohte. He þæt sona onfand*
ðæt hæfde gumena sum goldes gefandod,
heahgestreona. Hordweard onbad
earfoðlice oððæt æfen cwom;
*wæs ða gebolgen **beorges hyrde***

sought the treasure-cup; he suddenly discovered,
that a certain man had distrubed the gold,
the high treasures; the hoard-ward waited
with great difficulty, until evening came;
then was enraged the **keeper of the barrow**

***beorges weard* – barrow guardian**

2520 *wið ðam aglæcean elles meahte*
gylpe wiðgripan, swa ic gio wið Grendle dyde.
Ac ic ðær heaðufyres hates wene,
oreðes ond attres; forðon ic me on hafu
*bord ond byrnan. Nelle ic **beorges weard***

against the monster else I might
grapple for glory, as I did before with Grendel
but I there furious fire's heat expect,
fierce and poisonous; therefore I have on me
shield-board and byrnie; nor will I from the
barrow's guard

2580 *bysigum gebæded. þa wæs **beorges weard***
æfter heaðuswenge on hreoum mode,
wearp wælfyre; wide sprungon
hildeleoman. Hreðsigora ne gealp
goldwine Geata; guðbill geswac

driven in distress. Then the **barrow's ward** was
after the war-blow in a fierce spirit;
he spewed slaughter-fire; widely spread
battle-light. Of war-victory did not boast
the gold-friend of the Geats; his war-bill failed

3065 *mon mid his magum meduseld buan.*
*Swa wæs Biowulfe, þa he **biorges weard***
sohte, searoniðas; seolfa ne cuðe
þurh hwæt his worulde gedal weorðan sceolde.
Swa hit oð domes dæg diope benemdon

one among his kinsmen, inhabit a mead-hall;
thus it was for Beowulf, when he the **barrow's ward**
sought treacherous quarrels: he himself did not know
through what his parting from this world must bring about.
Thus until judgement's day deeply declared

***frætwa hyrde* – treasure guardian**

3130 *þæt hi ofostlice ut geferedon* *dyre maðmas. Dracan ec scufun,* *wyrm ofer weallclif, leton weg niman,* *flod fæðmian* ***frætwa hyrde****.* *þa wæs wunden gold on wæn hladen*	that they quickly carried out precious treasures; the dragon too they shoved, the wyrm over the cliff-wall, they let the waves take, the flood enfold, that **keeper of baubles**; that was braided gold loaded on the waggon

Other words that describe the dragon in the manuscript depict the beast as an enormous fire-breathing coiled beast, burned by the flames with smooth scales of many colors. We are in front of a very old and wise dragon that lived through *þreo hund wintra* - three hundred winters (2278). The fact that the dragon breaths fire is not stated with the use of a specific word, but we know that the dragon kills with its sharp teeth that are poisonous.

***biteran banum* – with sharp teeth**

2690 *ræsde on ðone rofan, þa him rum ageald,* *hat ond heaðogrim, heals ealne ymbefeng* ***biteran banum****; he geblodegod wearð* *sawuldriore, swat yðum weoll*	rushed at the brave man, when he was yielded space, hot and battle-fierce, (Beowulf's) whole neck he clamped **between sharp fangs**; he was drenched in life-blood; gore gushed in waves.

All the other key-words follow as usual quoted in OE.

***fyrwylmum fah* – marked by the surging flames**

2670 *atol inwitgæst, oðre siðe* ***fyrwylmum fah*** *fionda niosian,* *laðra manna; ligyðum for.* *Born bord wið rond, byrne ne meahte* *geongum garwigan geoce gefremman*	awful cruel visitor a second time, with hostile, **gleaming flood of fire** to seek his foes the hated humans; the flame came forth in waves, burned shield to the boss; the byrnie could not to the young spear-fighter lend support

***andgrimlic gryrefah gledumbeswæled* – grimly terrible with his many colors, burned by the flames**

***fifiiges fotgemear ces lang on legere* – fifty feet long in the place where it lay**

3040 *laðne licgean; wæs se legdraca* ***grimlic, gryrefah, gledum beswæled****.* *Se wæs* ***fiftiges fotgemearces*** ***lang on legere****, lyftwynne heold* *nihtes hwilum, nyðer eft gewat*	the loathsome one lying dead: the fire-drake was a **grim gruesome guest burnt by flames**; it **was fifty foot-measures** **long as it lay**; in air-joy it had ruled the times of the night, down again had gone

***hringbogan* – coiled creature**

2560 *wið ðam gryregieste, Geata dryhten;* *ða wæs* ***hringbogan*** *heorte gefysed* *sæcce to seceanne. Sweord ær gebræd* *god guðcyning, gomele lafe,* *ecgum unslaw; æghwæðrum wæs*	against the terror-guest, the Geats' lord; then was the **ring-coiled** one's heart incited to seek strife; his sword before drew the good war-king, ancient heirloom, imprudent with sword-edges; was in each

***wyrm wohbogen* – coiled worm/snake**

2825 *egeslic eorðdraca ealdre bereafod,*
bealwe gebæded. Beahhordum leng
***wyrm wohbogen** wealdan ne moste,*
ac hine irenna ecga fornamon,
hearde, heaðoscearde homera lafe

the terrible earth-dragon bereft of life,
balefully beaten down; the ring-hoard longer
the wickedly **coiled wyrm** could not control,
rather him irons' edges took off,
the hard, battle-notched leavings of hammers

***nacod* – naked**

2270 *hran æt heortan. Hordwynne fond*
eald uhtsceaða opene standan,
se ðe byrnende biorgas seceð,
***nacod** niðdraca, nihtes fleogeð*
fyre befangen; hyne foldbuend

reached to his heart. Hoard-joy he found,
the old twilight-scather, standing open,
he who, burning, seeks barrows,
the **naked** malevolent dragon; he flies by night,
encircled in fire; him earth-dwellers

***eald* – old**

2760 ***ealdes** uhtflogan, orcas stondan,*
fyrnmanna fatu feormendlease,
hyrstum behrorene; þær wæs helm monig
eald ond omig, earmbeaga fela
searwum gesæled. Sinc eaðe mæg

the **old** twilight-flier, beakers standing,
the vessels of men of old lacking a burnisher,
stripped of adornments; there was a multitude of helms
old and rusty, many arm-rings
cleverly fastened treasure easily may

2770 *þæt he þone grundwong ongitan meahte,*
wræte giondwlitan. Næs ðæs wyrmes þær
onsyn ænig, ac hyne ecg fornam.
ða ic on hlæwe gefrægn hord reafian,
***eald** enta geweorc, anne mannan*

so that he on the ground could perceive,
look over the ornament; there was not of the wyrm
any appearance, for him the blade-edge took.
Then I heard in the mound the hoard plundered,
old work of giants, one man

***winlrum frod* – old and wise with winter**

2275 *….……nan. He gesecean sceall*
hord on hrusan, þær he hæðen gold
*warað **wintrum frod**, ne byð him wihte ðy sel.*
Swa se ðeodsceaða þreo hund wintra
heold on hrusan hordærna sum

…… He has to seek
harm in the ground, where he heathen gold
guards **wise in winters**; he is not a bit better for that.
So the people-scather three hundred winters
ruled in the earth of one of the hoard-halls

2.1.3. Beowulf and the dragon

We analyzed the appearance of words concerning dragons in the episode of Beowulf's fighting with the beast (2200-3182). We have seen how the dragon is viewed from a Latin point of view – using the word *draca* – and from the Germanic point of view – using the word *wyrm*. The coexistence of these two word with a majority of the latter, state that the Germanic presence is still strong in the poem but viewed from a Latin perspective, for a complete analysis of this question see Lionarons (1998) chapter "The Beowulf dragon in its context", where she explains how the presence of the two words in Beowulf are there to establish a "miniature linguistic dialogue […] that would serve to emblematize the corresponding dialogue between the possible inter-text for the dragon, whether Biblical or Germanic"[1].

We pointed out how the dragon in the text is never described directly but always through words that tell us how it is an enemy, a guardian of the treasure, a flying creature and a very old beast. To be a complete analysis we add here that this dragon leaves his barrow only when it's dark, like the other monster of the poem, Grendel.

[1] Lionarons (1998)

2.2. Sigurđ

This chapter covers the *Heldendichtung* of Sigurđr and to his fight with the dragon Fáfnir. In each of two text that I will analyze, *Fáfnismál* and *Völsungasaga* , "*Fáfnisbani*" is the epithet of Sigurđr that means "dragon-slayer". Furthermore Sigurđr when talking to the dying dragon in *Fáfnismál* calls himself *gǫfuct dýr* "noble beast". I agree with scholarships that chose **stag** as a possible translation of *gǫfuct dýr* since they "[…] are not agreed on the interpretation of this expression. Most of them explain it as a reference to the stag" [1].

I will briefly focus here on the symbolism of Sigurđr in *Fáfnismál* and in particular on the opposition that creates among him and Fáfnir: one the stag, the other the dragon. In the *Physiologus* "in the chapter dedicated to the illustration of the symbolic meaning of the stag the animal is describes fighting against the snake. A contraposition between the stag and the snake ultimately traces back to pre-Christian times and is also attested in the Scandinavian world". [1] Later on the stag will be connected with the image of Christ himself and the fight with the dragon will be reduced to a fight between good and evil, between Christ and the Devil.

We have more than one version of Sigurđ's story. We can consider the *Völsungasaga* as a prose paraphrase of Sigurđr's adventure as it is written in the *Fáfnismál*, and I will analyze for each of the two narrations the parts where Fáfnir is taken into consideration and comparing the beast with the one in *Beowulf*. I will quote the original text to analyze the words used to describe Fáfnir in both poems and I will sum up analogies and differences in the last part of this section.

I will conclude this part dedicated to Sigurđr by analyzing the Germanic text *Nibelungenlied* by giving the original text as usual followed by the translation into modern English.

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[1] For a deeper analysis on the subject of the image of Sigurđr and his connection with the stag see: Massimiliano Bampi, *Gǫfuct dýr ec heiti: Deer Symbolism in Sigurđr Fàfnisbani?* , 14th International Saga Conference of Uppsala (2009) Pp.78-84.

2.2.1. Original text and translation of *Fáfnismál*

Fáfnismál is a poem contained in the *Codex Regius*, also called the *Elder Edda*, the *Poetic Edda* and *Sæmundar Edda*, written around 1270. *Fáfnismál* is preceded by *Sigrdrífumál* and followed by *Reginsmál* and tells of the slay of the dragon Fáfnir.

The traditional and apocryphal association of the manuscript with the Icelander Sæmundr Sigfússon, or Sæmundr *inn fróði* (the wise), marks a clear desire to authenticate its contents as not only old, but worthy of sustained and serious study[1].

> *Sigurðr ok Reginn fóru upp á Gnitaheiði ok hittu þar slóð Fáfnis, þá er hann skreið til vatns. Þar gerði Sigurðr gröf mikla á veginum, ok gekk Sigurðr þar í. En er Fáfnir skreið af gullinu, blés hann eitri, ok hraut þat fyrir ofan höfuð Sigurði. En er Fáfnir skreið yfir gröfina, þá lagði Sigurðr hann með sverði til hjarta. Fáfnir hristi sik ok barði höfði ok sporði. Sigurðr hljóp ór gröfinni, ok sá þá hvárr annan.*[2]
>
> Sigurd and Regin went up on to Gnita-heat, and came upon the trail by which Fáfnir slithered to the water. Then Sigurd dug a great pit in the path, and he enterd into it. When Fafnir slithered away from his gold, he spewed poison, which spurted from above on to Sigurd's head. When Fáfnir slithered over the hole, Sigurd pierced him to the heart with his sword. Fáfnir twisted about, flailing with his head and tail. Sigurd jumped out of the pit, and each of them gazed at each other.[3]

Sigurđ hides himself in a pit near Fáfnir's hole and waits until the dragon comes out and then he stabs the dragon in the heart. Then starts the wisdom-dialogue between the dying beast and Sigurđ that initially hides his name because it was a belief that a mortally wounded man had special powers if he cursed his slayer by name[4], we remember here that once Fáfnir was a man that then turned into a dragon to guard the treasure.

Sigurđ is warned by the dragon that the treasure he had guarded is cursed and that Regin will betray him, after this words the dragon dies.

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[1] Orchard (2011, p. XIV)
[2] For all the ON extracts see: Guðni Jónsson's edition with normalized spelling, at Heimskringla.no
[3] For all translation of *Fáfnismál* into modern English see Orchard (2011)
[4] Henry Adams Bellows, *The Poetic Edda*, Princeton University Press, 1936, p. 370

Fáfnir kvað:

22. “*Reginn mik réð,*
hann þik ráða mun,
hann mun okkr verða báðum at bana;
fjör sitt láta,
hygg ek, at Fáfnir myni;
þitt varð nú meira megin.”

Fáfnir said:

22. “Regin betrayed me,
he will betray you,
he’ll prove the killer of us both;
I reckon that Fáfnir must lose his life;
now you might has turned out more.”

After the dragon’s death we have stanzas 23-27 where Regin reach Sigurđ while he is wiping his sword from the dragon’s blood and cuts out Fáfnir’s heart and drinks the blood from the wound. He asks Sigurđ to cook the heart of his brother while he goes to sleep. From stanzas 28 to stanza 31, Sigurđ and Regin’s dialogue where Regin claims part of the victory over Fáfnir because Sigurđ used his sword to pierce the dragon, but Sigurđ replies that courage is more important than a sword in a fight. Then Regin goes to sleep and Sigurđ roasts the heart of Regin’s brother, when tasting if it was fully cooked he burnt his finger and stuck it in his mouth, suddenly he understands the speech of birds.

> *Sigurðr tók Fáfnis hjarta ok steikði á teini. Er hann hugði, at fullsteikt væri ok freyddi sveitinn ór hjartanu, þá tók hann á fingri sínum ok skynjaði, hvárt fullsteikt væri. Hann brann ok brá fingrinum í munn sér. En er hjartablóð Fáfnis kom á tungu hánum, ok skilði hann fugls rödd. Hann heyrði, at igður klökuðu á hrísinu.*
>
> Sigurđ took Fáfnir’s heart and roasted it on a stick; when he thought that it was fully cooked, and juice was exuding from the heart, he touched it with his finger to test if it was fully cooked. He burnt his finger and stuck it in is mouth. But as soon as the blood from Fáfnir’s heart hit his tongue, he understood the speech of birds; he heard nuthatches in the undergrowth.

Sigurđ hears that Regin will betray him and decides to kill him. Then Sigurđ eats the heart of the dragon and drinks the blood of Regin and also the one of Fáfnir, the birds speak again in stanzas 40-44, advising Sigurđ to win Gudrun’s hand using part of the golden hoard, this way *Fáfnismál* ends.

> *Sigurðr reið eftir slóð Fáfnis til bælis hans ok fann þat opit ok hurðir af járni ok gætti. Af járni váru ok allir timbrstokkar í húsinu, en grafit í jörð niðr. Þar fann Sigurðr stórmikit gull ok fylldi þar tvær kistur. Þar tók hann ægishjálm ok gullbrynju ok sverðit Hrotta ok marga dýrgripi ok klyfjaði þar með Grana, en hestrinn vildi eigi fram ganga, fyrr en Sigurðr steig á bak hánum.*

> Sigurđ rode along Fáfnir's trail to his lair, and found it open, with doors and door-frames of iron; all the house-beams were also iron, buried at the base in the earth. Sigurđ found a vast amount of gold there, and filled up two chests. He took the helmet of dread, a gold corselet and the sword Hrotti, along with many valuable items, and loaded it in Grani's packs; but the horse wouldn't set off until Sigurđ mounted on to his back.

It follows here the analysis of the text and the view we infer of Fáfnir. *Fáfnismál* is also called Fáfnir's lay, (folios 30r-31v in the *Codex Regius*) and in stanzas 1-22 we find the conversation of Sigurđ with the dying dragon. The dragon is described by Sigurđ's words in stanza 12 and 14 where we know that Fáfnir is a wise dragon.

Segðu mér, Fáfnir,	Tell me, Fàfnir,
alls þik fróðan kveða	since they call you wise,
ok vel margt vita	and you know very much

and by the words of Fàfnir itself we know that it can breathe poison, and not fire.

Eitri ek fnæsta, er ek á arfi lá	Poison I breathed forth when I lay upon
miklum míns fǫður;	the mighty inheritance of my father
(lacunam)	(missing text)

And then again in stanza 19 Sigurđ describes Fàfnir as a *inn fráni* ***ormr****, þú gerðir fræs mikla | ok galzt harðan hug* (gleaming **serpent**, you made much hissing: | and harsh you made your heart). From stanza 23, after the dragon's death, Fáfnir's description is echoed in the words of Regin and Sigurđ (stanzas 26, 28, 29).

Sigurðr kvað:	Sigurđ said:
26. "*Þú því rétt,* *er ek ríða skyldak* *hélug fjöll hinig;* *féi ok fjörvi* *réði sá inn fráni* ***ormr****,* *nema þú frýðir mér hvats hugar.*"	26. "You've advised that I ride the holy fells over here: both wealth and life that gleaming **serpent** would keep, unless you'd question my courage."
Sigurðr kvað:	Sigurđ said:
28."*Fjarri þú gekkt,* *meðan ek á Fáfni rauðk* *minn inn hvassa hjör;* *afli mínu* *atta ek við* ***orms*** *megin,* *meðan þú í lyngvi látt.*"	28. "Far off, you went while in Fáfnir I reddened this sharp sword of mine; I needed my strength against the **serpent**'s might while you hid on the heather."

Reginn kvað:

29. "*Lengi liggja*
létir þú lyngvi í
þann inn ***aldna jötun***,
ef þú sverðs né nytir,
þess er ek sjalfr gerða,
ok þíns ins hvassa hjörs."

Regin said:

29. "For long you'd have left
that **ancient giant**
lying in the heather,
if you hadn't used the blade that I made
myself, that sharp sword of yours."

Fáfnir is not the same beast as *Beowulf*'s one for the following reasons. While the latter is referred to as a *wyrm* or *draca*, Fáfnir is mostly referred to as a *ormr*, snake in Old Norse, and just once as *aldna jötun*, ancient giant. We can say that it is Beowulf's bane the great dragon of Germanic lore, while Fáfnir is a mere snake, yet not less important for the narration but significantly different from the *draca* of *Beowulf*.

His appearance is different from Beowulf's bane, it has no wings and it does not pour fire nor its body is affected by it. We said that the dragon of Beowulf is called *draca* and even *eorđ-draca* while Fáfnir is called *dreki* and few words after *lyngormr* (*Völsungasaga* cap. XVIII) referring to the "snake of the heather".

Fáfnir crawls and breathes poison and it does not have wings while Beowulf's one does and it is not the only dragon that flies[7]. When stabbed by Sigurđ, Fáfnir reveals to have wisdom and speaks in riddles point that underlines how Tolkien took inspiration from Fáfnir to create Smaug. They both guards golden hoards and are more human-like than the dragon in *Beowulf*.[8] To create Smaug, the red dragon that guards a magnificent hoard under the Lonely Mountain in *The Hobbit*, Tolkien took great inspiration also from Beowulf's *draca*, since both dragons wake up and unleash their anger after the theft of a precious goblet.

[7] see *Krákumál*'s kenning *flugdreki sára* and *Þorsdrapa*'s kenning *flugdreki slíđra* both referring to flying dragons compared to a javelin in the first kenning, to a sword the latter.
[8] Ármann Jakobsson (2009). "Talk to the Dragon: Tolkien as Translator". *Tolkien Studies* **6**: 27–39.

2.2.2. Original text and translation of *Völsungasaga*

The *Volsungasaga*'s chapters 18-20 can be considered a prose rewriting of *Fáfnismál*. I will quote those passages where Fáfnir is described and I will highlight parts that differ from *Fáfnismál*.

Fáfnir is once referred as a *dreki* and in all the rest of the text is described as a *ormr* with eight occurrences and three more occurrences that refers to Fáfnir's heart.

The original text is taken from, and the translation into modern English is taken from William Morris and Eirikr Magnusson's work.[9]

Occurences in the text from:

Chap. XVIII

> *Þá mælti Sigurðr: "Þat sagðir þú, Reginn, at **dreki** sjá væri eigi meiri en einn **lyngormr**, en mér sýnast vegar hans ævar miklir." Reginn mælti: "Ger gröf eina ok sezt þar í. Ok þá er **ormrinn** skríðr til vatns, legg þá til hjarta honum ok vinn honum svá bana. Þar fyrir fær þú mikinn frama." Sigurðr mælti: "Hversu mun þá veita, ef ek verð fyrir sveita **ormsins**?"*
>
> Then Sigurd spake: "How sayedst thou, Regin, that this drake was no greater than other lingworms; methinks the track of him is marvellous great?" Then said Regin, "Make thee a hole, and sit down therein, and whenas the worm comes to the water, smite him into the heart, and so do him to death, and win thee great fame thereby."
>
> *Þá svarar inn gamli maðr: "Þetta er óráð. Ger fleiri grafar ok lát þar í renna sveitann, en þú sit í einni ok legg til hjartans **orminum**."*
>
> Then answered the old man and said, "Thou doest after sorry counsel: rather dig thee many pits, and let the blood run therein; but sit thee down in one thereof, and so thrust the worm's heart through."
>
> *Ok er **ormrinn** skreið til vatns, varð mikill landskjálfti, svá at öll jörð skalf í nánd.*
>
> Now crept the **worm** down to his place of watering, and the earth shook all about him, and he snorted forth venom on all the way before him as he went
>
> *Ok er **ormrinn** skreið yfir gröfina, þá leggr Sigurðr sverðinu undir bægslit vinstra, svá at við hjöltum nam.*
>
> So whenas the **worm** crept over the pits, Sigurd thrust his sword under his left shoulder, so that it sank in up to the hilts

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[9] *The Story of the Volsungs*, translated by William Morris and Eirikr Magnusson, Walter Scott Press, London, 1888. Online source http://sacred-texts.com/neu/vlsng/index.htm last viewed on 20th February 2014.

*Ok er inn mikli **ormr** kenndi síns banasárs, þá laust hann höfðinu ok sporðinum, svá at allt brast í sundr, er fyrir varð.*

Now when that mighty **worm** was ware that he had his death-wound, then he lashed out head and tail, so that all things soever that were before him were broken to pieces.

Chap. XIX

*Nú tekr Sigurðr sitt sverð, Gram, ok þerrir á grasinu ok mælti til Regins: "Fjarri gekk þú þá, er ek vann þetta verk ok ek reynda þetta snarpa sverð með minni hendi ok mínu afli. Atta ek við **orms** megin, meðan þú látt í einum lyngrunni, ok vissir þú eigi, hvárt er var himinn eða jörð."*

Then Sigurd took his sword Gram and dried it on the earth, and spake to Regin: "Afar thou faredst when I wrought this deed and tried this sharp sword with the hand and the might of me; with all the might and main of a dragon must I strive, while thou wert laid alow in the heather-bush, wotting not if it were earth or heaven."

*Reginn svarar: "Þessi **ormr** mætti lengi liggja í sínu bóli, ef eigi hefðir þú notit sverðs þess, er ek gerða þér minni hendi, ok eigi hefðir þú þetta enn unnit og engi annarra."*

Said Regin, "Long might this **worm** have lain in his lair, if the sharp sword I forged with my hand had not been good at need to thee; had that not been, neither thou nor any man would have prevailed against him as at this time."

*Þá skar Sigurðr hjartat ór **orminum** með því sverði, er Riðill hét.*

Therewith Sigurd cut out the **heart of the worm** with the sword called Ridil

*Ok er hjartablóð **ormsins** kom á tungu honum, þá skyldi hann fuglarödd.*

when the **heart-blood of the worm** touched his tongue, straightway he knew the voice of all fowls, and heard withal how the wood-peckers chattered in the brake beside him

Chap. XX

*Ok eptir þetta etr hann suman hlut hjartans **ormsins**, en sumt hirðir hann*

Then Sigurd ate some deal of **Fafnir's heart**, and the remnant he kept.

2.2.3. Original text and translation of *Nibelungenlied*

The *Nibelungenlied* is written in Middle-High German and tells the story of the dragon-slayer Siegfried (Sigurđ in the Nordic tradition), at the court of the Burgundians and of how he was murdered. It dates back to the early 13th century and its authorship is unknown.

I decided to analyze the *Nibelungenlied* as the last text of my essay because the dragon is not directly part of the narration and so "less important" in the light of this work, even if the *Nibelungenlied* is the earliest text of Sigurđ's legend. In the text some elements of the story were changed or deleted, elements that we find for example in the *Beowulf*, in the *Völsungasaga* and in the *Fáfnismál*.

All the extracts of the text are taken from the online resource provided from the *Bibliotheca Augustana*[10], while the translation is taken from George Henry Needler's work[11].

Of Siegfried's youth the *Nibelungenlied* does not speak. We do not have any reference of his voyage towards Fáfnir's barrow and this adventure of young Siegfried is presented only in Hagen's words. We notice how Hagen recognize the warriors and their lord (Adv. III, strophes 86-101) even if he never saw Siegfried before.

> 86 *also sprach do hagne | ich wil des wol veriehn*
> *swi ich sivriden | nimer hab gesehn*
> *so wil ich wol gelovben | swi ez darvmbe stat*
> *daz ez si der reche | der dort so herlichen gat*
>
> Further then spake Hagen: / "As far as goes my ken,
> Though I the noble Siegfried | yet have never seen,
> Yet will I say meseemeth, | howe'er the thing may be,
> This knight who seeks adventure, | and yonder stands so proud, is he.

Hagen goes on telling how Siegfried won the hoard and killed the dragon. This part differs from *Fáfnismál* in length and in the hero's actions, in the latter poem Sigurđ does not bath into Fáfnir's blood but only tastes it from his burned finger and only after will drink it.

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[10] Bibliotheca Augustana, *Das Nibelungenlied 1190/1200* accessed on 20th February 2014
< www.hs-augsburg.de/~harsch/germanica/Chronologie/12Jh/Nibelungen/nib_n_00.html >
[11] George Henry Needler, *The Nibelungenlied: Translated into Rhymed English Verse in the Metre of the Original*, University College, Toronto, September, 1904

100 *noch weiz ich an im mere* | *daz mir ist bechant*

*einen **lintrachen** den* | *slvoch des heldes hant*
er badet sich in dem blvote | *sin hvt wart hvrnin*
des snidet in chein wafen | *daz ist diche worden scin*

100 Still know I more about him, | that has to me been told.
A **dragon, wormlike monster,** | slew once the hero bold.
Then in its blood he bathed him, | since when his skin hath been
So horn-hard, ne'er a weapon | can pierce it, as hath oft been seen.

The peculiarity of *Nibelungenlied* is that the dragon-fight episode covers two and half lines, *noch weiz ich an im mere* | *daz mir ist bechant / einen lintrachen den* | *slvoch des heldes hant / er badet sich in dem blvote*, this is all we have of the slaying of Fáfnir in the poem. The fact that Sigurđ adventure is not narrated in a longer form is because a dragon-slaying story may be not appropriate for a court of the 1200.[12]

In the XV Adventure, strophe 899 and 902 we have Kremhild's mention of the dragon-slaying episode while talking to Hagen where she confess Siegfried's secret, the Achilles' heel of the eroe. When Siegfried bathed into the dragon's blood a linden leaf covered his back between the shoulders. The dragon's blood made his skin like a protective coat of horn.[13]

899 *si sprach min man ist chvene* | *vnt darzv starch genvch*
*do er den **lintrachen*** | *an dem berge slvch*
ia badete sich in dem plvote | *der reche vil gemeit*
davon in sit in stvrmen | *nie dehein waffen versneit*

she spake: "A valorous husband | is mine, and doughty too.
When he the **worm-like dragon** | by the mountain slew,
In its blood the stately | knight himself then bathed,
Since when from cutting weapons | in battle is he all unscathed.

*902 do von des **trachen** wunden* | *vloz daz heize blvt*
vnd sich darinne badete | *der chvene ritter gvt*
do viel im zwihssen di herte | *ein lindenblat vil breit*
da mach man in versniden | *des ist mir sorgen vil bereit*

When from the wounded **dragon** | reeking flowed the blood,
And therein did bathe him | the valiant knight and good,
Fell down between his shoulders | full broad a linden leaf.
There may he be smitten; | 'tis cause to me of mickle grief.'

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[12] K.C.King, "Siegfried's fight with the dragon in the Edda and the Hürnen Seyfrid," London Medieval Studies 1,1, 1937 p.77
[13] Winder McConnell, *A companion to the Nibelungenlied*, Columbia, S.C. : Camden House, 1998 p.46

2.2.4. Analysis of Fáfnir

Even though is present in all the three texts analyzed the worm Fáfnir has different importance in the narration. While in *Völsungasaga* and *Fáfnismál* the importance of the worm is reflected in the length of the poem in the *Nibelungenlied* the episode with the worm is seen as a symbolic threat and not a physical one as was for Sigurđ who personally faced the beast and risked his life. Fáfnir is called dragon only few times and mostly is referred to as a *ormr*, a snake therefore a great difference exists between Beowul'f bane and Fáfnir.

It is interesting to notice that Fáfnir is once called *lintrachen (Nibelungenlied*, strophe 899), and this connects us to the German Linte, the tree whose leaf covered Siegfried back and caused his death.

Fàfnir is referred to both as a *dreki* and a *ormr*, but these words "are also used interchangeably with dragons themselves as evidenced in later manuscripts including the chief manuscript for Volsunga saga, in which Sigurdr refers to Fáfnir as *dreki* and Reign responds using *ormr"*.[15]

3. Abstract

The aim of this work is to examine the figure of the dragon, the beast that crossed the centuries from the early myths, passing through all the Middle-Ages and finally landed to the shores of fantasy literature with the books of J. R. R. Tolkien above all.

Far from being considered a complete research work, due to the vast amount of information and books on the subjects, this essay focuses on the Nordic dragon of manuscripts such as *Beowulf* (Cotton Vitellius A. xv.), the *Nibelungenlied*, the *Völsungasaga* and the section on *The Elder Edda* named *Fáfnismál*.

[15] Robert E. Cutrer, *The Wilderness of Dragons: The reception of dragons in thirteenth century Iceland*, Master's Thesis, University of Iceland, 2012, p.11

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